

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 4168

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NO, UR, SV

SUBJECT: SVALBARD: DREW MIDDLETON STORY

REF: STATE 197530 (NOTAL); PINKNEY-MANSFIELD TELECON SEPT .9

1. IN SEPTEMBER 10 MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY'S DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS VIBE, DCM BROUGHT UP QUESTION OF DREW MIDDLETON STORY. GIVEN INFORMAL DISCUSSION EARLIER THIS YEAR WITH SOME NORWEGIAN OFFICIALS ABOUT WAYS U.S. MIGHT STRENGTHEN NORWAY'S HAND IN DEALING WITH SOVIETS OVER SVALBARD, EMBASSY WISHED TO ALERT FOREIGN MINISTRY THAT DEPT MIGHT FEEL NEED TO ISSUE STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ABOUT MIDDLETON ARTICLE BUT HAD NOT INSTIGATED THE ARTICLE. (VIBE AGREED THAT MIDDLETON PROBABLY BASED STORY ON BRIEFINGS HE RECEIVED FROM LOCAL MILITARY ON NORWEGIAN-SPONSORED TOUR THIS SUMMER.) ON PERSONAL BASIS, DCM SHOWED VIBE DRAFT OF WHAT DEPARTMENT MIGHT SAY (PER TELECON).

2. VIBE EXPRESSED SOME UNHAPPINESS OVER MIDDLETON ARTICLE WHICH HAD ALSO PROVOKED NORWEGIANS TO PREPARE A CONTINGENCY STATEMENT. HE APPEARED DISTRESSED BY ARTICLE'S GENERAL TONE AND NOT BY ANY PARTICULAR STATEMENT E.G. REFERENCE TO "PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS" UNDER WHICH PASSAGE OF SOVIET SUBS "CAN BE DETECTED BY THE ALLIANCE." HE SUMMARIZED AND LATER SENT EMBASSY THE TEXT OF NORWAY'S CONTINGENCY STATEMENT AS FOLLOWS:

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BEGIN QUOTE. FOLLOWING CAN BE STATED IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION CONCERNING SVALBARD IN DREW MIDDLETON'S ARTICLE IN NYT: IN THE SVALBARD TREATY OF 1920, NORWAY IS ACCORDED FULL AND UNRESTRICTED SOVEREIGNTY POWER ON SVALBARD. THE TREATY IS SIGNED BY A LONG SERIES OF STATES, AMONG THEM THE SOVIET UNION. NO PROPOSAL FROM THE SOVIET SIDE HAS BEEN DISCUSSED CONCERNING JOINT RULE ON SVALBARD. ON THE CONTRARY, THE SOVIET SIDE HAS REPEATEDLY CONFIRMED THAT IT RECOGNIZED AND ACCEPTS FULL NORWEGIAN SOVEREIGNTY OVER SVALBARD. THE TREATY GIVES CITIZENS EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TO UNDERTAKE CERTAIN TYPES OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY. THE SOVIET UNION CARRIES OUT, AS IS KNOWN, A SUBSTANTIAL MINING OPERATION ON SVALBARD AND IS IN THIS CONNECTION VERY CONCERNED TO TAKE CARE OF ITS INTERESTS. THE PRACTICAL QUESTIONS WHICH ARISE IN THIS CONNECTION HAVE BEEN THE SUBJECT OF NORWEGIAN-SOVIET DISCUSSIONS. END QUOTE.

3. VIBE PHONE DCM LATER TO EXPRESS MINISTRY'S PLEASURE OVER SUBSTANCE OF DRAFT U.S. CONTINGENCY STATEMENT. WHILE HE NOTED HE HAD NO AUTHORITY TO ASK U.S. TO PUBLISH STATEMENT, IT WAS CLEAR HE WAS SAYING FOREIGN MINISTRY WOULD BE HAPPY TO SEE STATEMENT ISSUED. VIBE IS TOO CAUTIOUS TO GIVE SUCH A CLEAR SIGNAL ON HIS OWN.

4. COMMENT: IN RECENT CONVERSATION, FINN SOLLIES, FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER HEADING NANSEN INSTITUTE, CONFIRMED EMBASSY'S IMPRESSION THAT NORWEGIANS HAD BACKED AWAY SOMEWHAT FROM THEIR STATED INTEREST EARLIER THIS YEAR IN HAVING U.S. DEMONSTRATE ITS INTEREST IN ARCTIC AND SVALBARD MORE FORCIBLY. HE CLAIMED THAT CONCERN SHOWN BY EMBASSY IN HELPING NORWAY PROTECT ITS SOVEREIGNTY CONTRIBUTED TO THIS CHANGE OF ATTITUDE BY MAKING NORWAY FEEL LESS ALONE AND EXPOSED. VIBE'S REACTION, HOWEVER, INDICATES NORWEGIANS REMAIN SENSITIVE TO SOVIET PRESSURE AND WOULD ACCORDINGLY APPRECIATE HAVING THEIR HAND STRENGTHENED PRIOR TO UPCOMING NEGOTIATIONS BY STATEMENT LIKE THAT PREPARED BY DEPARTMENT-IF OPPORTUNITY STILL ARISES FOR COMMENT.

5. SEPT. 11 ISSUE CONSERVATIVE VERDENS GANG SUMMARIZED MIDDLETON ARTICLE ABOVE INTERVIEW WITH FORMIN FRYDENLUND HEADLINED "NO RUSSIAN PRESSURE ON NORWAY", IN WHICH HE PARAPHRASED ABOVE-CITED CONFIDENTIAL

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CONTINGENCY PRESS GUIDANCE.
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